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ABSTRACT

In June 1993, the Quebec Commission d'evaluation de l'enseignement collegial (CEEC) was created to conduct evaluations of the assessment of student achievement and quality of college programs and studies in the province. Having jurisdiction over the 117 colleges in the province, the CEEC is charged with evaluating institutional policies on student and program evaluation, the colleges' implementation of programs established by the Minister of Education, and objectives and standards of programs established by the colleges. The Commission is also empowered to develop evaluation criteria and instruments, recommend measures to individual institutions, and make recommendations to the Minister of Education. To achieve its aim of ensuring quality college education, the CEEC's means and approach will include the following four elements: (1) the use of proven techniques and instruments in a rigorous manner for conducting program evaluations; (2) the performance of college-specific evaluations to take into account individual differences, with an emphasis on the formative aspect of evaluations; (3) an emphasis on collaboration with the institutions involved; and (4) the maintenance of autonomy, independence, and neutrality. The Commission's first priority is the evaluation of policies related to the evaluation of student achievement, after which programs of studies will be addressed. Excerpts from the legislative bill creating the CEEC and a Ministry position paper on the need for the CEEC are appended. (BCY)

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The Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial: Its Mission and Directions

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COMMISSION D'ÉVALUATION DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT COLLÉGIAL

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Introduction

The Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial was created to implement the far-reaching college education renewal proposed by the Minister of Education to ensure that "all Quebecers [...] have access to a **high-calibre, top-quality college education that enables them to attain the highest possible skills standards**"[1].

The Commission's efforts and resources will be devoted to seeking and implementing the best means for achieving this goal, which is common to all those concerned with college education.

This document will attempt to provide insight into the directions guiding the Commission's activities, to the context and outlook governing the various components of its mission, and to the means and instruments it intends to use to forge relationships with colleges and college-level spokesbodies.

Written primarily for college staff, it is a preliminary document to be finalized over the coming months based on feedback from its target audience.

Since not everyone concerned by evaluation in the college context may be thoroughly acquainted with the legal and regulatory framework governing the Commission's activities, this document makes frequent reference to the relevant background material, especially in Part One.

In Part Two, it presents the aims and principles underlying the Commission's actions based on current legislation, and government and ministerial provisions.

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1. MESS, *Colleges for the 21st Century*, Québec, April 1993, p. 19.

Part One

The Basis of the Commission's Activities

To understand the basis of the Commission's activities, we will look at the context within which it was created and identify its mission, powers and objectives.

1. Context

As a follow-up to the work of the Committee on Education in late 1992, the Québec government announced, in April 1993, the policy directions and measures for renewal it advocated for college education in Québec.

It indicated that all individuals and organizations involved in college education would be asked to join in efforts spanning several years aimed at providing Québec with a college educational system adapted to the times and to the needs of Québec society. The government announced the creation of the Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial mandated specifically to enhance the quality, credibility, and recognition of education offered in Québec's colleges.

The directions and means selected cover numerous aspects of college education and call for action from all involved at this level of education.

The **main guidelines** underlying the Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial's activities are:

- "The key to quality and success lies in the vitality of the colleges themselves. In higher education, such vitality and the academic responsibility linked to defining programs of study are decisive".[2]

- "It is primarily the colleges that are responsible for evaluating student achievement and the degree to which educational objectives have been attained".[3]

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2. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
3. Ibid., p. 38.

- "Implementation of the proposed renewal hinges on colleges assuming greater academic responsibility. [...] To maintain an equilibrium, greater freedom in this area would be offset by stricter *a posteriori* evaluation mechanisms."[4]

Those renewal **measures** most clearly falling within the Commission's mandate are compulsory. Consequently, each college educational institution governed by the *College Education Regulations* must:

- define and implement an institutional policy on the evaluation student achievement (IPESA) which includes a significant number of additions and changes;

- develop an institutional policy on program evaluation (IPPE) for the programs it offers, and implement it;

- submit its institutional policy on the evaluation of student achievement (IPESA) and its institutional policy on program evaluation (IPPE) to the Commission for evaluation;

- work with the Commission in evaluating the implementation of its programs of studies, i.e. programs established by the Minister of Education and programs established by the college.

These bases for the renewal of college education constitute the Commission's guidelines. They are the main components of the new environment within which the Commission will conduct its activities.

2. The Commission's Mission and Powers[5]

The Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial's wide-ranging mission is directed primarily at enhancing the quality of college education and student education, although it covers virtually all aspects of education at this level, with a special emphasis on student learning and programs of studies.

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4. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

5. The mission and powers of the Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial are largely set forth in sections 13 and 19 of the Act constituting it, as reproduced in Appendix 1. Information on the Commission's mission and powers is also included in the document *Colleges for the 21st Century* which is reproduced in Appendix 2.

2.1 Its Sphere of Activities

The mission that legislators have assigned the Commission consists essentially in *evaluating* the following for each college:

- institutional policies on the evaluation of student achievement and their implementation;
- institutional policy on program evaluation and their implementation;
- implementation of programs of studies established by the Minister of Education;
- objectives, standards, and implementation of programs of studies established by the college.

2.2 Its Jurisdiction

The Commission's mission applies to all colleges. Currently, this means 117 institutions[6] divided as follows:

- 47 general and vocational colleges (Cegeps);
- 11 public institutions under ministries other than the Ministère de l'Éducation;
- 25 subsidized private colleges;
- 34 licensed private institutions.

2.3 Its Powers

Legislation attributes three main powers to the Commission:

- the power to verify;
- the power to make recommendations;
- declaratory power.

The Commission enjoys considerable autonomy in its work. It can:

- evaluate how some or all institutions implement any college program of studies it designates;

6. If the three campuses of Champlain Regional College are included, the total comes to 119.

- develop evaluation criteria and instruments and ensure their dissemination; form advisory committees and determine their powers, duties, and operating rules; retain the services of experts;

- conduct an evaluation whenever it deems expedient and according to the procedures it establishes;

- recommend that the educational institution take certain measures to enhance the quality of its evaluation policies, programs, or program implementation. These measures can also concern the organization, operation and academic management of the institution;

- make recommendations to the Minister on any matter relating to programs of studies and evaluation policies, including any governmental or ministerial policy affecting college management of programs of studies and evaluation;

- recommend that the Minister authorize an educational institution to award the Diploma of College Studies;

- make public its evaluation report in whatever manner it deems appropriate;

- authorize individuals to visit any educational institution being evaluated and gather whatever information they require.

The Commission's mission and powers are exercised in keeping with the freedom of action and openness befitting a public agency. As such, it must report the results of its evaluations, describe changes in college education, and publicize the results of the colleges' quest for higher quality in education.

3. The Commission's Objectives

A statement of the Commission's mission and powers might seem sufficient to define and characterize its activities. However, it is useful to view both within a broader perspective and interpret them somewhat.

The move to create the Commission reflects the very dynamic of college education and is considered to be an important measure in the college renewal, which is centred on the quality of student education.

Like the other interests involved in college education, the Commission must help to develop a form of college education that enables students to "acquire solid, appropriate, credible education enabling them to develop fully as free, responsible individuals and take their rightful place in society, and the labour market".[7]

The Commission does not deal with students directly. It makes its contribution by working specifically with those mandated to continually improve the quality of education and enhance the value of diplomas.

Furthermore, to promote society's recognition of both college education and college graduates, the Commission has to testify to the quality of this education and the progress made.

To support it in these efforts, legislation has set two objectives for the Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial:

- Evaluate institutional policies on the evaluation of student achievement and on programs of studies and evaluate the programs themselves, "i.e. rule formally on how colleges fulfil their academic responsibilities".[8]

- Report evaluation results to colleges, the Minister, and the population.

The Commission will do its utmost to contribute as effectively as possible:

- to increasing the relevance and quality of college education and thereby student education;

- to having this relevance and quality recognized by all spokespersons for and beneficiaries of college education.

These aims and directions underlie the Commission's commitment and express the values that guide its work.

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7. *Colleges for the 21st Century*, p. 6.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

Part Two

The Commission's Aims and the Means Proposed for Achieving Them

The mission and goals of the Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial are embodied in the means and approach outlined below.

1. Means

Four elements characterize the means proposed by the Commission for achieving its aims.

1.1 Proven, Rigorous Processes

To ensure that its evaluation and recommendations are credible and will be acted upon, the Commission will be rigorous and thorough. The tools it uses will be highly valid.

The Commission will use proven techniques, and methods, procedures and instruments for measurement and analysis tailored to its objectives. It will rely on "procedures that are widely used in higher education: questionnaires and self-evaluation, the opinions of experts working in the appropriate fields, visits to the institutions, preliminary reports, college reactions and discussion, final reports, etc."[9]

If need be, the Commission will conduct more in-depth verification through interviews, analyses, surveys, etc. It will not depend only on external indicators and fragmentary information, but will ensure that it has enough information to carry out its mission as rigorously as possible. Without this rigour, the Commission would be unable to offer college educational institutions, students, and other parties the kind of service they rightfully expect from it.

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9. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

1.2 College-Specific, Qualitative Evaluations

A college's organizational culture and operating procedures, the number of educational programs it offers, and the composition of its student body are all factors that differentiate it from other colleges and create a certain diversity within the college system. To determine each college's particular situation and take into account the characteristics specific to it, the Commission will visit colleges, use questionnaires, collect data, analyze college publications, etc.

To give each college the opportunity to cast the first critical glance at its policies and study programs, the Commission will insist that all institutions conduct their own prior internal evaluation. It will then be better able to rely on local perceptions and the dynamic specific to each institution.

In its evaluation reports, the Commission does not wish to confine itself to stating what is being done correctly and what is not. Rather, it would like to combine its evaluation with conclusions and recommendations to the college and, in some cases, indications on the direction and scope of subsequent verifications it foresees.

Because its aim is essentially to help improve the quality of education, the Commission will stress the formative aspect of its evaluations.

The Commission will thus not grade or rank institutions. Since it believes that the current wealth of diverse practices and methods should be preserved, the Commission will not adopt policies or leanings advocating standardized institutional practices.

1.3 Collaboration with the Institutions

Because it wishes to make college-specific, qualitative evaluations, the Commission will strive to work as a collaborator.

To do so, it will do its utmost to fully inform all institutions of the different aspects of its work. This commitment is exemplified by the publication of this and other documents, and the tour it has scheduled for the first half of 1994.

When appropriate, the Commission will also indicate the processes, criteria, and methodology used in its evaluations, as well as its work schedule, so that the colleges can

prepare themselves accordingly and not be taken by surprise. If need be, the Commission may even organize information sessions on the various aspects of its approach.

After each evaluation, the Commission will submit its conclusions to the college being evaluated and await its feedback before writing the conclusions into the final public report.

The Commission considers evaluation to be a preferred means for those involved in seeking higher quality college education to exercise their social and educational responsibilities. It would thus like to promote the development of a genuine culture of evaluation within each college.

1.4 Autonomy, Independence, and Neutrality

The Commission needs autonomy, independence, and neutrality to act effectively. These are the foundations of its credibility, as much for the colleges as other parties and the general public.

While working very closely with the colleges on many matters, the Commission will also have to keep a certain distance. For example, while taking into account the particular constraints its work may place on some or all colleges, the Commission must have a free hand in identifying the policies and programs to be evaluated, setting the schedule and timetable for these evaluations, and choosing its recommendations. In short, it must not be bound by institutional constraints or constraints related to the college "system", although it must take them into consideration in performing its duties.

The Commission's autonomy will also be apparent in the way it releases the results of its evaluations to the public. To ensure openness and transparency, it may decide to disclose the entire content of its evaluations, issue summaries or publish specific reports.

2. The Commission's Approach

The Commission intends to begin carrying out the different aspects of its mandate as soon as possible, giving priority to what is most pressing.

Its first move will be to evaluate institutional policies on the evaluation of student achievement (IPESA) since, beginning in fall 1994, all institutions will have to implement a revised IPESA based on the new *College Education Regulations* and new social and

economic realities.[10] The Commission will be ready to evaluate the new IPESAs as soon as they are submitted.

The Commission intends to begin evaluating programs of studies as soon as possible in 1994 by focusing first on certain programs widely widespread in public and private institutions. In this way, it will help familiarize institutions with processes and procedures they will find useful in drafting their Institutional Policy on the Evaluation Student Achievement (IPESA).

Similarly, the experience gained from these initial evaluations will enable the Commission to gradually improve its processes, methodology, and evaluation tools.[11]

Later, the Commission will be able to specify its aims for and approach to evaluating the Institutional Policy on Program Evaluation (IPPE).

Finally, the Commission hopes that colleges will gradually develop their own culture of evaluation and that, through self-evaluation, they will be better placed to ensure the quality of the education they offer and the reliability of the diplomas they grant. Once this practice is firmly entrenched, the Commission will set the criteria it will use for recommending that the Minister allow an institution to award the Diploma of College Studies.

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10. Information on the approach to IPESA evaluation is provided in a document published by the Commission entitled *Evaluating Institutional Policies on the Evaluation of Student Achievement* (General Guidelines).

11. Further details on the approach to program evaluation are given in a document published by the Commission entitled *Evaluating Programs of Studies* (General Guidelines).

Conclusion

The quest for quality in college education and student education, like its corollary, evaluation, is part of an ongoing, demanding process of development.

An important, significant change has been made by granting colleges greater autonomy and by introducing new verification mechanisms. The results of this change should become known and recognized in the years to come.

This is how the Commission understands and will carry out its mandate. To help make this approach to change effective and productive, it wants to work as a collaborator in instituting a genuine culture of evaluation in the colleges.

This culture will apply to study programs that will henceforth be subject to continual adjustment. The changes made to the *College Education Regulations*, the new responsibilities entrusted to institutions, the debates continuing on various advisory committees, and the Commission's contribution through its evaluations will result in these programs being frequently modified to reflect current needs.

Together with other aspects of the college education renewal, these changes will call on all of the colleges' creative energies. The Commission intends to fully participate in this demanding but necessary initiative, which is so important for the population of Québec.

Appendix 1

Extracts from

AN ACT RESPECTING THE COMMISSION D'ÉVALUATION DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT COLLÉGIAL[12]

CHAPTER II
MISSION AND POWERS

13. The mission of the Commission shall pertain to the college instruction provided by general and vocational colleges and by any other public or private educational institution to which the College Education Regulations apply.

Its mission shall consist in evaluating, for each educational institution,

(1) the institution's policy on the evaluation of learning achievement and the procedures for the certification of studies, and their implementation;

(2) the institution's policy on the evaluation of programs of studies, and their implementation;

(3) the implementation of the programs of studies established by the Minister of Higher Education and Science, taking in account the objectives and standards assigned to them;

(4) the objectives, standards and implementation of the programs of studies established by the institution, taking into account the needs these programs are designed to meet.

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12. *An Act respecting the Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial and amending certain legislative provisions.* Bill 83 (1993, chapter 26). Passed on June 15, 1993. Sections 13 to 19.

14. The Commission may also evaluate the implementation, by all or some of the educational institutions, of any program of college studies it designates.

15. The Commission may, in exercising its powers and duties,

(1) develop evaluation criteria and instruments and ensure their dissemination;

(2) form advisory committees and determine their powers and duties as well as their operating rules;

(3) retain the services of experts.

16. The Commission may carry out an evaluation each time it considers it expedient. It shall give prior notice thereof to the educational institution concerned and give it an opportunity to present its views.

The Commission shall conduct its evaluation according to the method it determines.

17. The Commission shall prepare an evaluation report containing its findings and conclusions.

In its report, the Commission may recommend to the educational institution any measure to improve the quality of its evaluation policies, its programs or the means by which its programs are implemented.

The Commission may also make recommendations to the Minister on any matter relating to programs of studies. It may, in particular, recommend to the Minister that an educational institution be authorized to award the Diploma of College Studies.

18. The Commission shall send a copy of its evaluation report to every educational institution concerned and to the Minister.

The report shall be made public by the Commission in the manner it considers appropriate.

19. The Commission may generally or specially authorize any person to collect from any educational institution concerned by an evaluation the information necessary for the carrying out of its mission.

To that end, the person authorized may:

(1) have access, at any reasonable time, to the facilities of the institution;

(2) examine and make copies of any relevant register or document;

(3) require any relevant information or document.

Appendix 2

Extracts from the document

COLLEGES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY[13]

3.3
Combining Greater Academic Responsibility with a Stricter Evaluation Mechanism

Creating a Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial

The widespread desire to strengthen external evaluation mechanisms is very likely the result of two changes within the college sector. First, the creation in 1979 of the Conseil des collèges with its Commission de l'évaluation led to significant progress in evaluation practices. However, this progress has come to something of a standstill (structurally and through no fault of college officials) and a more rigorous mechanism is now required, one that is geared to the greater academic autonomy deemed desirable for Québec colleges. Second, in recent years, the Ministry's evaluation strategy has contributed to heightening the awareness of the need for major change in the form of: a link between an institutional policy for the evaluation of student achievement and granting diplomas; the publication of various institutional performance indicators; the implementation of a French proficiency test for university applicants; verifying the usefulness of a final examination in social sciences and mathematics; and testing institutional evaluation of programs of studies offered, etc.

The structure of the new committee is not that of the traditional representative group. Instead, it will consist of **three commissioners**, appointed by the Government on the recommendation of the Minister and clearly mandated to evaluate, i.e. rule formally on, how colleges fulfil their academic responsibilities. The Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial would enjoy an essentially public **declaratory power** and the power to make recommendations concerning the colleges (changes to institutional policies

13. Gouvernement du Québec, Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Science, Québec, April 1993, pp. 36-41.

or the manner in which programs are offered, for example) and the Minister's role (possible changes in the objectives of certain programs, possible delegation of the power to grant the DEC, and so on).

[...]

An evaluation of institutional policies and, above all, of programs of studies as they are offered, covers a broad range of realities within the colleges, including instruction and its management, education management, student achievement, graduate performance on the labour market and at university, etc. Evaluating the programs offered is one form of evaluating the institution and its practices. To do so, the committee would employ procedures that are widely used in higher education: questionnaires and self-evaluation, the opinions of experts working in the appropriate fields, visits to the institutions, preliminary reports, college reactions and discussion, final reports, etc. As is the case for other similar committees, the permanent staff would see to basic operations, while outside consultants would conduct the evaluation itself.

The proposal to establish a formal **accreditation system** was not adopted, as it would be incompatible with a system in which the Minister continues to approve and authorize programs of studies and grant diplomas. Accreditation systems normally apply to a group of institutions that exercise full authority over their programs and diplomas. However, the dynamic engendered by defining new academic responsibilities for the colleges and by delegating the authority to grant the province-wide diploma might conceivably lead to even greater autonomy.

[...]

Possibly Delegating the Power to Grant the DEC

As mentioned, following evaluation, the new Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial would be empowered to recommend that the college concerned be authorized to grant the Diploma of College Studies (DEC). At the same time, the Minister would be empowered to delegate to a college, on the express recommendation of the Commission, all or part of his or her responsibility for granting the DEC. It is important to stress that it is the DEC rather than an institutional diploma which is involved here, and that this measure would allow the college to unilaterally guarantee the quality of that DEC.

This new provision, adapted to Québec programs and certification procedures, seems to be a progressive, realistic, educationally sound way to move toward a system which combines certification by the institution and external evaluation of that institution. It is natural to expect a great deal from such an incentive, based essentially on publicly acknowledged quality. At the very least, the incentive should foster a broader degree of academic autonomy, as targeted by the proposed renewal.

Commission d'évaluation
de l'enseignement collégial